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ABSTRACT

The most fundamental classification of individuals into social groups is whether an individual belongs to your group (ingroup member) or to some other group (outgroup member). Individuals tend to favor their own group as compared to the outgroup; perceive outgroup members as being different from ingroup members and homogeneous in their own attitudes and behavior; and perceive ingroup members as similar to one another, but possessing a variety of opinions and behaviors. Memory for ingroup and outgroup members' behaviors is influenced by expectancies generated by social categorization. This study examined the effect of social categorization on memory for attitudes of ingroup and outgroup members. College students (N=39) were assigned to a group affiliation based on an arbitrary criterion and were informed that the other person in the study was in their group, the other group, or given no group affiliation for the person. Subjects were given an attitude profile of the person constructed to contain an equal number of similar and dissimilar attitudes to their own. The results of a free recall task indicated that subjects recalled both similarities and differences about ingroup members, but remembered only differences about outgroup members. These findings suggest that social categorization affects the encoding of information which leads to a differential recall effect. (Author/NB)

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SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION AFFECTS RECALL OF INGROUP AND OUTGROUP MEMBERS' ATTITUDES

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**SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION AFFECTS RECALL OF
INGROUP AND OUTGROUP MEMBERS' ATTITUDES**

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ABSTRACT

Subjects were assigned to a group affiliation based on an arbitrary criterion and informed that the other person participating in the study was in the same group, the other group, or given no group affiliation for the person. They were then given an attitude profile of the person which was constructed so that it contained an equal number of similar and dissimilar attitudes to their own attitudes. The results of a free recall task indicated that subjects recalled both similarities and differences about ingroup members, but only remembered differences about outgroup members. The findings suggest that social categorization affects the encoding of information which leads to a differential recall effect.

SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION AFFECTS RECALL OF INGROUP AND OUTGROUP MEMBERS' ATTITUDES

Tajfel (1978, 1981) theorized that our desire to order the world motivates us to classify ourselves and others into various social groups. The most fundamental classification is whether an individual belongs to your group (ingroup member) or to some other group (outgroup member). Knowing that an individual is a member of a particular group - gender, race, academic discipline, etc., - and classifying that group as "my group" or "their group" provides us with immediate, efficient, although sometimes biased, information about the person.

Numerous studies have found that even when people are divided into groups based on a superficial and arbitrary criterion, individuals favor or overevaluate their own group as compared to the outgroup (Brewer, 1979; Turner, 1981; Wilder, 1986). We also perceive members of the other group as being different from us and homogeneous in their own attitudes and behavior (Park & Rothbart, 1982), while members of our group are viewed as similar to us, but possessing a variety of opinions and behaviors (Billig & Tajfel, 1973, Doise, 1978).

Memory for ingroup and outgroup members' behaviors is influenced by expectancies generated by social categorization. Howard and Rothbart (1980) found that not only did subjects expect outgroup members to act more

negatively, but they remembered more negative behaviors that were associated with outgroup members. When given subcategory information about ingroup and outgroup members, subjects were more likely to recall the information about ingroup members (Mackie & Worth, 1989).

The present study was designed to study the effect of social categorization on memory for attitudes of ingroup and outgroup members. Subjects were presented with an equal number of similar and dissimilar attitudes from an ingroup, outgroup, or non-categorized individual. They were then asked to recall information about this person who had attitudes that were similar and attitudes that were dissimilar to their own attitudes. We predicted that social categorization would influence the memory process and thus, result in a differential recall of the attitudes.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

Thirty-nine undergraduates participated in a study on communication processes.

DESIGN/PROCEDURE

Subjects completed a survey that assessed four demographic variables and ten attitudes on various campus and national issues. They were then presented with five Escher prints and were instructed to describe what they saw

in the picture. Based on their responses, subjects were ostensibly placed in either the Concrete or the Abstract group depending on their "perceptual type." All subjects were actually told that they were in the Concrete group. Subjects were then given a profile supposedly completed by the other participant in the experiment. The profile indicated the group identification (Concrete, Abstract, or no identification) and was constructed so that half of the responses were similar to the subject's attitudes and half were dissimilar. The questions were divided into two sets (A and B). For half of the subjects, set A responses were similar to the subject's responses and set B responses were different (Set A). The reverse was true for the other half of the subjects (Set B).

After completing an intervening task, subjects' recall for the other person's attitudes was assessed. They were first asked to write down the person's group affiliation and then anything they could remember about the person (free recall). Next, they were given a blank survey profile and instructed to complete it as the other participant did (cued recall).

RESULTS

The number of similar and dissimilar attitudes recalled for both the free recall and cued recall was calculated for each subject. A 3(Group Affiliation) by 2(Response Set)

analysis of variance was computed for each dependent variable. For the free recall measures, the results revealed significant interactions for the number of similar responses recalled, $F(2, 23) = 6.97$, $p < .004$, and for the number of different responses recalled, $F(2, 23) = 5.50$, $p < .01$. The mean number of responses for the free recall measures can be found in Table 1. One should note that when Set B responses were manipulated to be similar to the subject's responses, Set A responses were different.

Post-hoc analyses indicated for Set A, subjects in the ingroup and the non-categorized groups recalled more similarities, $F(2, 11) = 11.69$, $p < .002$. The ingroup and outgroup conditions recalled more responses that were different from the subjects' responses for Set B., $F(2, 12) = 10.78$, $p < .002$.

For the cued recall measures, the only significant effects were due to the manipulation of response set. In general, subjects were quite accurate when completing the blank survey as the other person had responded. However, subjects remembered more similar responses for Set A (set A mean = 7.14, set B mean = 6.67), $F(1, 23) = 5.25$, $p < .03$, and more responses that were different for Set B (set A mean = 6.86 and set B mean = 7.33), $F(1, 23) = 5.25$, $p < .03$.

DISCUSSION

The results supported the hypothesis that individuals would recall similarities for ingroup members and differences for outgroup members. However, the findings were somewhat more complex. We manipulated the set of responses that were similar or different from the subject's responses. This was done simply to control for any effect of the types of questions asked on the survey. However, the results indicated that the manipulation of set interacted with the group classification manipulation to affect recall.

When the responses of the other person were similar to the subject's responses on Set A questions and therefore, different on Set B questions, subjects in the ingroup and no-categorization conditions recalled more of the similar responses. However, when the responses of the other person were similar to the subject's responses on the Set B questions, more responses that were different (responses on the Set A questions) were recalled by subjects in the ingroup and the outgroup conditions. It appears that the seven questions in Set A assessed more salient or important issues for the subjects. Consequently, our hypothesis was only confirmed for the Set A questions. Obviously, future research needs to provide more rigorous pre-testing in order to develop questions that are matched for salience and importance.

The results for the Set A questions provide a more complex picture of the cognitive effects of social categorization. When a person is given information about an ingroup member, both similarities and differences are processed. However, when the individual is confronted with the same information about an outgroup member, only the differences between them are salient. Clearly ingroup members possess a "similarity bias", yet are able to perceive themselves as individuals with differing characteristics (Doise, 1978). On the other hand, individuals have a "difference bias" toward outgroup members who are perceived as homogenous in their attitudes and behaviors (Park & Rothbart, 1982). It appears that the expectancy for ingroup members to share similar characteristics, yet also be more heterogeneous, leads subjects to recall both similar and dissimilar attitudes. Subjects expect outgroup members to be different from them, and consequently, only remember the dissimilar attitudes. These findings advance the growing body of research that shows that naturally occurring cognitive processes contribute to ingroup-outgroup effects.

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TABLE 1

**MEAN SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES RECALLED
BY GROUP CLASSIFICATION AND RESPONSE SET**

	SIMILARITIES		DIFFERENCES	
	SET		SET	
	A	B	A	B
INGROUP	3.40	3.40	4.80	5.40
OUTGROUP	.75	3.20	3.00	4.40
NO GROUP	5.20	1.80	4.60	1.60